



# Friends and Families Matter

From Heartbreak to Healing  
Support for those coping with the incarceration of a loved one

September 3, 2013

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Law and Justice Interim Committee:

My name is Shari Rigg. I am here with Janee Weber representing Friends and Families Matter, a community-based non-profit organization working to provide support for those coping with the incarceration of a loved one.

We urge your support for the study resolution regarding Crossroads Correctional Center, which is the private prison in Shelby. The Shelby prison has policies and procedures that differ from those at the Montana State Prison, and friends and family members are often confused by the complex contractual relationship between the Department of Corrections and the Shelby prison. This committee has heard testimony during this interim and during the last interim alleging misuses of authority in the treatment of inmates, substandard medical, dental, and mental health care, and chronic understaffing. Additionally, you have heard serious allegations about the misuse of the Inmate Welfare Fund to offset prison expenses and even about the Fund being misappropriated by staff for personal use. Other allegations pointed to recreational and hobby programs as well as food services being cut to reduce expenses and maximize profits.

All of this suggests a fatally flawed system for monitoring contract compliance, tracking the use of public funding, and providing oversight of the Inmate Welfare Fund. We hope this study will allow for a thorough examination of these matters. We need to know whether this for-profit company has been using Montana's taxpayer dollars for private gain at the expense of fulfilling its obligation to provide for the safety and basic needs of our incarcerated citizens. This study is especially important and timely given that Montana's 20-year contract with Corrections Corporation of America expires in a few years.

If this study resolution passes and is assigned to the Law and Justice Interim Committee, we hope you will invite a Friends and Families Matter spokesperson to be on a panel or make a special presentation. We have much to share. Families must not only heal their own hurt from the crime, but also worry about their loved one's safety and health. Families fear their loved one will be hardened and traumatized by their experiences inside, becoming more damaged, angry, and lost. Ultimately, when the father, mother, son, daughter, sister, brother, fiancé, or friend is released and returns home, what went on inside the walls will, for better or worse, be reflected in our families and communities.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

Shari Rigg

FAFM Board Member

Law and Justice Meeting  
September 3, 2014

Exhibit 17